OCCURENCE OF JAPANESE THREADFIN BREAM *NEMIPTERUS JAPONICUS* (Bloch, 1791) IN THE NORTHERN RED SEA

by

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Abstract.— The distribution of *Nemipterus japonicus* (Bloch) is extended by this new record to the Gulf of Elat in the Northern Red Sea.

Résumé.— La distribution géographique de *Nemipterus japonicus* (Bloch) est étendue au Golf d'Elat, pointe nord de la Mer Rouge.

The Indo Pacific species *Nemipterus japonicus* (Bloch, 1791) has been reported from the southern Red Sea (Rüppell, 1826 ; Kluntzinger, 1884 ; Ben Tuvia, 1968) and from the Gulf of Suez (Bayoumi, 1972 ; Ben Tuvia and Grofit, 1973 ; Porter, 1973). Although *N. japonicus* is abundant in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez, where it comprises 35 % and 3.5 %, respectively, of the commercial trawl catch composition (Ben Tuvia, 1968 ; Bayoumi, 1972), the species has not been previously recorded north of the Tiran Straits, Gulf of Elat (Gulf of Aqaba). Ben Tuvia and Grofit (1973) found this species to be more prevalent in waters deeper than 30 fathoms than in shallower waters, and as *N. japonicus* is generally considered to be vertically distributed to a depth of 80 m (Fischer and Whitehead, 1974), it appears that the present specimen was caught at an exceptional depth for this species (200 m).

Fisheries statistics (Ben Tuvia, 1968) stressed the commercial importance of *N. japonicus* in the southern Red Sea. We assume that due to the lack of trawling fisheries and the apparent restricted deep vertical distribution of the species in the Gulf of Elat, it was not previously recorded in this region. *Nemipterus japonicus* differs from other species of the genus which are represented in the Red Sea by possessing an elongated filament on the upper lobe of the caudal fin (absent in *N. marginatus* and *N. tolu*), and by its distinct color pattern.

One male specimen has been caught near Elat harbor on May 13th, 1982, by experimental handline, at about 200 m depth. It measures 257 mm (302 with caudal filament) in total length and 185 mm in standard length. The specimen is preserved in the Zoological Museum of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, HUJ-F 10865. Two other specimens from the Gulf of Suez, HUJ-F 6284, TL 182 (223), and HUJ-F 6288, TL 120 (124) are also preserved in the Zoological Museum ; locality of both, Ras Mal'ab (29°10'N ; 32°50'E), Date 11.11.72.

General distribution

Read Sea including the Gulf of Suez and Gulf of Elat, East Africa, Persian Gulf, Northern Indian Ocean, Malaya Archipelago, Phillippines, China, Japan, and possibly to northern coasts of Australia. A report on *N. japonicus* as a Red Sea immigrant into the Mediterranean (Eggleston, *in* Fischer and Whitehead, 1974) has yet to be confirmed (Ben Tuvia, -personal communication).

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